

Testimony of Rep. John P. Sarbanes
Committee on House Administration, Subcommittee on Elections
Member Day
December 17, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Butterfield, and Members of the Subcommittee for holding today's important hearing and for all the work you do to protect and strengthen our democracy.

The stakes for this work could not be higher. The 2020 election demonstrated the need for wholesale democracy reform. Americans across the country were forced to overcome rampant voter suppression, gerrymandering and a torrent of dark money just to exercise their vote and voice in our democracy. Our election workers faced threats, intimidation and harassment.

Less than one year ago, we witnessed firsthand some of our democracy's most fragile moments. Today, misinformation and disinformation about our elections continue to spread and in many parts of the country, efforts continue unabated to restrict Americans' access to a free and fair ballot.

As you know, the American public is calling on Congress to take action to protect and expand the right to vote, increase government transparency and safeguard the integrity of our democratic institutions. This House rose to the occasion in March, passing H.R.1, the For the People Act, which is now being considered in the Senate, where it has been reformulated as the Freedom to Vote Act. Then, in August, we passed H.R.4, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Taken together, these transformational bills will promote clean and fair elections, end the dominance of big money in our politics and ensure the voice of the people is fairly represented in Congress, and strengthen key protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

If Congress is successful in passing these critical pieces of legislation, the Committee on House Administration will have a pivotal role to play in guiding their effective and efficient implementation.

Much as you did with the successful slate of field hearings conducted in states like Florida, Ohio, Georgia and Texas as H.R. 1 and H.R. 4 were being crafted, I would encourage the Committee to continue to garner the perspectives of a broad range of voters, stakeholder groups and Members of both parties. I would also encourage the Committee to conduct robust oversight to ensure that all provisions are operating as intended and evaluate the need for any further democracy reforms. Particular attention must be brought to the grassroots "small d" democratic infrastructure that our citizens rely upon to ensure their voices are being heard and respected.

Our democracy is resilient, and I am confident that Congress can and will take meaningful action to restore Americans' faith in it. This Committee has been indispensable in catalyzing that effort and will be an ongoing source of vigilance when it comes to the integrity of our electoral politics.

I have been honored to stand by your side in this fight to protect our democracy and I look forward to continuing our efforts to redeem the vote and the voice of all Americans.